

# Cleary College moves to Ann Arbor

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Tom Sullivan spent Wednesday afternoon packing, cramming 10 years of memories into a dozen boxes on the floor in his office.

As the president of Cleary College, Sullivan reflected on the steps that led to the 116-year-old business college's plans to move to Ann Arbor. For him, the decision was bittersweet.

"I have mixed emotions about the move," he continued. "I'm very excited about the opportunity the new facility presents to our students. On the other hand, this has been my office for 10 years and there's a lot of personal history here."

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
at least the next five years, if not permanently. The decision came as a surprise to Ypsilanti officials, especially considering the college had recently won approval to build a new facility on its current site.

In the end, the decision to stay at an interim facility for several years made the most sense, Sullivan said.

Cleary sold its current classroom building to a Southfield-based developer, who plans to raze the building and build a Walgreen's drugstore. The college was considering staying in part of its Silkworth building on the campus while the new building was being constructed, but that didn't pan out, Sullivan said.

This morning, a Dearborn moving company began packing up at the college on the corner of Washington Avenue and Hewitt Road. The move is expected to take two days, and spring term classes begin at the new building Monday.

By Wednesday afternoon, cleared-out classrooms stood vacant, and boxes and furniture lined the hallways. Staff members scram-



NEWS PHOTO • LEISA THOMPSON

**Chris Graham, an accounts receivable technician and book store assistant, helps with the packing in the Cleary College book store Wednesday as the college begins its move to a new location in Ann Arbor off Plymouth Road.**

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## **CLEARY: Bittersweet feelings over move**

bled to pack up the remainder of their belongings before movers arrived.

In past weeks, much of the school's surplus materials — desks, chairs and shelves — were sold to staff and community members. Files were thrown away. But the big push didn't start until this week, when students left for spring break.

Donna Franklin, dean of students at Cleary, started packing Wednesday. Her staff had been at it for three weeks.

"I'm happy and sad about the move," said Franklin, who started at the college in 1983. "I'm a loyal woman, and I love the room I'm sitting in."

Franklin gestured toward the window and her dry cleaner and dentist's office and the dozens of other nearby places she won't see every day. But the advantages of having a new and upgraded building won her favor.

"It's seriously bittersweet for me," Franklin said. "But it's going to work out wonderfully. I've talked to students and their reactions depend on how long they've been here. A lot are attached to the building, but they're finding it will be easier in the new one."

Cleary officials haven't ruled out the possibility of returning to Ypsilanti in the future. Sullivan said despite the move to a new city, the relationship with Ypsilanti won't change.

"Some classes still met at the end of last week, but we didn't want to inconvenience our students too much," Sullivan said. "I'm sure when we start Monday, we'll discover that we can't find a file or something. It won't be much different from moving a home."

Renovation work is nearly complete at the new 20,000-square-foot site to prepare it for Cleary's 500 students, Sullivan said. The current 56,000-square-foot building and auditorium were too large, and the auditorium was used just twice a year.

"Our facility was aging, and maintenance was deferred in the 1980s," Sullivan said. "Our objective in moving was to remain in Washtenaw County and in the eastern portion. We feel we accomplished both of those."

Cleary College alumnus Brad Blair said that although he feels a certain sadness about Cleary's move, he's excited about the plans for the new facility.

"I think it's good in the big scheme," Blair said. "It means they'll be around for the next 100 years. I'm more excited that they're growing."

Blair, who graduated in 1970 from Cleary, said he's optimistic that the move will be for the best. He lives in the neighboring College Heights subdivision and said he'll keep a close eye on what happens to the property in the future.

"It's exciting from the standpoint that it's a generational leap for them," Blair said. "My instincts tell me that it will work out well for

them."

When Cleary College officials announced plans to move, Ypsilanti city officials were blindsided by the news.

Sullivan said he was surprised by their reaction.

"I met with the mayor, and she understood the facts had changed, and it was a sound business decision," Sullivan said. "We'll remain as committed to Ypsilanti as we have been for the last 100 years. Just because we're not physically on this corner doesn't change our commitment to serve Ypsilanti."

Ypsilanti City Manager Ed Koryzno said the city has not had any conversations about the move with Cleary officials since the announcement was made.

"I think there was a certain feeling of betrayal," Koryzno said. "We'll wait to see if they come back."

The Cleary College Board of Trustees and administrators have commissioned a third party to look at the feasibility of building on eight acres the college owns just north of its current building.

Sullivan said the college isn't in a hurry to make a decision.

"It needs to be considered and analyzed by a third party," Sullivan said. "We don't have a compulsion to bring immediate closure to the question. We have some breathing room now."

"I think we'll all be tired by the end of this week, but it will be exciting next week."